

BORDERS AND CONSTRUCTIVIST REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIES: CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION ADDRESSING CHALLENGES TO ALTERNATIVE COHESION POLICIES

Author: *James W Scott**, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Keywords: borders, cohesion, cross-border cooperation

Abstract: Many socio-spatial phenomena can only be described, explained, or traced; they cannot be meaningfully measured, counted or “correlated” in a positivistic manner. Studies with a “soft” (constructivist) approach on perceptions and representations also have the benefit that they critically challenge the researcher’s own preconceptions. This is clearly most relevant in relating the significance of cross-border cooperation and other flexible territorial arrangements to European Cohesion Policy. In this presentation I suggest that CBC is more than just filling the gaps between national development strategies; it is a cultural context for Cohesion beyond traditional nation-centric modes. Furthermore, cross-border integration need not be all-encompassing but centred on specific networks that create trust and sustainable working relationships. If the role of CBC as an element of European Territorial Cohesion is to be taken seriously, the policy aim should be less focused on criteriology (fulfilling “objective” quantifiable targets) and more on the capacities of cross-border cooperation to develop according to its own dynamics. This includes more support to civil society actors and their networks; these groups, together with other local-level actors can in effect create regional geographies above and beyond traditional state-centred and administrative territoriality.